

Ironwood Forest National Monument
Draft Goals and Objectives on Lands and Realty and Mining
July 28, 2004
Comment Summary

The following are summarized comments from the public meeting conducted Wednesday, July 28, 2004 at the Pima County Parks and Recreation Center in Tucson, Arizona regarding the draft goals and objectives for Lands and Realty and Mining within the monument.

The meeting included an introduction by Larry Shults and presentations on lands and realty, mining/minerals, and utilities within the monument. The presenters and presentations were, (1) Jennifer Frownfelter of URS on lands and realty, (2) Bill Auby of BLM on minerals and mining, and (3) Lee Aitken of Tucson Electric Power (TEP) on utilities and utility corridors.

The meeting attendance included 17 individuals from the general public and agencies (outside of BLM). Attendees worked in one discussion group and discussed the draft goals and objectives.

General Items and Comments:

- BLM needs to ensure that established corridors within the monument are not used by myriad of other interests and remain for the intended use.
- The existing rights-of-way within the monument are not in perpetuity and will expire in approximately 2026. These rights-of-way can be renewed. However, BLM has the authority to approve or deny an application for right-of-way, even a renewal, if there is good reason.
- Corridors accommodate access, maintenance, construction, and staging areas for utility companies. However, TEP indicated they would not utilize the corridor within the monument as a staging area as areas outside the monument could be used.
- BLM should utilize master plans prepared by communities to identify areas of future utility development needs (e.g., distribution lines, fiber optic, water and gas pipelines).
- BLM should contact Trico to discuss the future need of distribution lines to serve the private inholdings within the monument.
- The question was asked why these lines could not be buried. Lee Aitken explained that underground lines are cost-prohibitive when dealing with the high voltage transmission lines that presently cross through the IFNM. In addition, there are environmental issues to consider, such as the increased amount of ground disturbance, which would result in potential impacts on air quality, soils, water quality, archaeological resources, etc. when compared to overhead lines.
- Mr. Aitken (TEP) indicated the utility corridor that traverses the monument has two existing rights-of-way, each right-of-way is 165 feet wide. One transmission line exists to date in the corridor; however, TEP has planned for a future line (up

to 500 kilovolts) to be placed west of the existing line (within the existing right-of-way).

- The group discussed what other types of utilities could be co-located within a corridor. Other uses could include fiber optic lines, gas pipelines, communication facilities, and other transmission or distribution lines with appropriate distance for health and safety reasons.
- Mining on Arizona State Trust Land consists of mining leases and saleable sand and gravel. Locatable minerals are via permit only (e.g., no mining exploration without a permit). As a side note related to the difficulty in receiving a permit to mine on State Trust Land, there have been only nine leases approved for hard rock minerals for the State since 1988.
- Asarco and the areas near Asarco make up the majority of the mining claims within the monument.
- Develop a new goal to address corridors and the existing and future uses of those corridors and preserve existing corridors for transmission access only.
- Develop goals and objectives for existing corridors that parallel the goals and objectives on rights-of-way.
- No new corridors are best for the monument.
- BLM should not plan for new significant impacts (i.e., additional utility corridors).

Lands and Realty Comments:

GOAL NUMBER 1: *Acquire non-Federal land and interests in land to further the natural and cultural resource goals for the monument.*

- The term “acquire” is too narrow/limiting. Suggest using the word “Secure” instead.
- Include other types of agreements (e.g., partnerships, shared responsibilities, etc.).
- It was noted that acquisition through land swap could affect areas within and outside the monument.
- Ownership should not matter so long as it managed by a single entity for conservation (i.e., consolidate the management of lands through cooperative agreements with other agencies or landowners).
- Develop a new objective to state, “Pursue cooperative agreements with other agencies and organizations as a way to secure non-federal land and interests.” It was noted that even State Parks has to buy lands from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD).

Objective 1: *Consider land tenure (ownership) adjustment requests on a case-by-case basis.*

- Reword to be more proactive such as, “Pursue opportunities for land acquisition and consider land disposal on a case-by-case basis only to further the natural and cultural resource goals of the monument.”

Objective 2: *Ensure lands are acquired from willing sellers.*

- Reword to say, “Ensure lands are acquired and conservation easements are secured from willing sellers.”

Objective 3: *Prioritize lands for acquisition based on presence of desirable resources.*

- Restate to say, “Prioritize lands for acquisition based on presence of desirable resources and (the results of a) threat assessment.”
- Threat assessment needs to be defined.
- Determine if there is a risk that land can be sold for an undesirable use in conflict with Proclamation objectives.
- BLM has to purchase land from ASLD via auction.

Objective 4: *Secure easements where land cannot be acquired.*

- Reword to make a more broad statement by using terms such as, leases, conservation easements, recreation easements, rights-of-way, etc.

Objective 5: *Acquire mineral estate: (1) Underlying BLM managed surface estate/ownership (2) When acquiring surface estate.*

- The group agreed that BLM needs to check this data and if it does not exist, this objective should be deleted.

GOAL NUMBER 2: *Manage utility corridors and rights-of-way to avoid or minimize impacts to the objects for which the monument was established.*

- Reword to say, “Manage existing utility corridors...”
- Consider the potential “need” for a corridor on the monument.
- Suggest leaving this goal without the word “existing” to allow for alternative development.
- Suggest separating the corridor language from the right-of-way language because of their differences.
- Reword to include language on managing rights-of-way (future and existing) and drop language on utility corridor and address separately elsewhere.
- Develop a new objective for Goal Number 2 that states, “Develop plans to control/mitigate noxious weeds in established rights-of-way.”
 - It was noted that this should tie back to transportation and access goals, objectives, and limitations.

Objective 1: *Authorize construction / maintenance activities of utilities in locations that utilize existing rights-of-way efficiently.*

- Change the word “existing” to “established” to make the goal broader.
- Change “authorize” to “ensure.”
- Develop utility standards (best management practices) for construction and maintenance.

- Reword to say, *“Ensure construction / maintenance activities of utilities in locations that utilize existing rights-of-way efficiently and do not conflict with the natural and cultural resource goals for the monument.”*

Objective 2: *Require the implementation of mitigation measures to ensure that maintenance of existing rights-of-way does not conflict with the natural and cultural resource goals for the monument.*

- Change the word “existing” to “established” to make the goal broader.

Mining/Minerals Comments:

GOAL NUMBER 1: *Protect the monument from unauthorized mining activities.*

- Add an objective to address education of the public.
- Add an objective to say that BLM needs to perform validity exams on existing mining claims.
- Reword this goal to say, *“Manage mining on the monument to ensure protection of monument resources.”*

Objective 1: *Allow extraction of mineral materials for administrative uses within the monument.*

- O.K.

Objective 2: *Prevent unnecessary and undue degradation from mining activity on grandfathered mining claims that have established valid existing rights.*

- O.K.

Objective 3: *Reclaim abandoned mines to natural landscape conditions or convert to another use (i.e., adaptive reuse).*

- Define “convert to another use” by using examples such as, abandoned mines, wildlife water catchments, or quarry interpretive site.
- Delete the word “landscape.”
- Add “consistent with the protection of the objects within the monument” after “another use.”

Objective 4: *Assess abandoned mines for the presence of physical and chemical hazards, and wildlife habitat.*

- O.K.

GOAL NUMBER 2: *Interpret the geologic features within the monument.*

- O.K.

Objective 1: *Promote identification and inventory of unique geologic features such as dune fields, desert fields, desert pavement, crypto biotic soil crusts, and playa sediments.*

- O.K.

Objective 2: *Encourage detailed scientific study and documentation of unique geologic features.*

- O.K.

Terms that need to be defined more clearly:

- Threat Assessment